



COLORADO FELINE FOSTER RESCUE ADOPTION GUIDE

Congratulations on your adoption from CFFR. This guide contains valuable information and helpful tips to ensure that you and your feline can form a long, healthy relationship together.

1. **First... BE PATIENT!** Remember that the cat you have adopted has been through a lot and is coming out of a comfortable foster home into YOUR home, which is completely foreign to them. He/she may be a bit shy at first, and it could take him/her time to feel comfortable and secure around his/her new family. Remember the [Rule of 3/3/3](#).

2. INTRODUCTIONS WITH RESIDENT PETS!

When introducing your cat to their new home, set up a safe space or “base camp.” This can be any small room where your new cat can adjust to his or her new surroundings without feeling overwhelmed. DO NOT use a laundry room. If you are using a bathroom, be sure and keep the toilet seat down!

- When entering the house for the first time with your new cat, have a towel over their carrier so that they do not see any of your other pets, and your other pets do not see them on the way to their base camp!
- Ensure the room has limited places for your cat to hide and explore at their own pace.
- Place food, water, litter box, toys, and scratching post in the room.
- Keep them in their basecamp until they are adjusting and ready to explore. Spend plenty of time with them there!

A. Introducing Your New Cat to Your Resident CAT

Adding a new cat to your household is exciting, but it can also lead to turmoil. While the first few days in your home can be ones of high stress, knowing how to socialize your resident cat with the new one can make the transition go smoother. CONTROL as much as you can of their initial encounters. Call CFFR if you think you have an issue so we can help!

- **Limit Expectations:** You can expect it to take anywhere from 8-12 months for cats to become friends. While some cats will develop close bonds, others never grow close. Still, they can learn to tolerate each other.
- **Maintain Separation:** In the initial stages, each cat should have his own space (base camp) with litter box, bed, food and water bowls and scratching posts/pads (have both, as some cats prefer to scratch horizontally and some vertically). Cats think territorially, and this keeps them from fighting over resources.
- **Introduce by Smell:** Start by letting the two cats hear and smell each other, but don't let them see or touch. Cat behaviorists recommend that you rub the cats' cheeks separately with a towel to collect cat pheromones. You can then rub the other cat's cheeks with the towel after and introduce both to the new scent. In this way, the cats will accustom themselves to the other's scent without feeling threatened. The pheromones relieve anxiety, and they provide information to each cat about the other.
- **Encourage Interaction Through a Closed Door:** Place both cats' food bowls on the opposite side of the door to the safe room you have set up for your new cat and put the opposite cat's towel under the other's food dish.
- **Slightly Open the Door:** After you've had success with them eating on either side of the door without incident (this typically takes at least a week), slightly open the door of the safe room so the cats can see each other but cannot fully put their head through the door. Hissing and growling is normal, but if one tries to swat the other, close the door. Do this a few times a day.
- **Allow Interaction:** Once the cats can see one another through the cracked door and do not hiss or growl, it is time to let them interact. Start by holding one cat on your lap or placing them in a carrier while you allow the other cat to walk around and see the cat safely on your lap or in the carrier. Cats may hiss at each other, which is natural. Do this for a while then switch the cats' places so the other cat can walk around the room. Do this a few times a day -frequency is more important than the duration of these visits. Expect this to continue for a few days to a couple of weeks. After you are successful in this last step, you can begin supervised visits with both cats unrestrained in the same room. If either cat becomes aggressive and tries to attack or bite, break up the interaction quickly using a heavy towel (not your bare hands). Return the new cat to their safe room for 1-2 days, then repeat the process. You should never yell at or punish the cats for their behavior but instead spend time reassuring them. Let the resident cat dictate the pace of introductions!

B. Introducing Your New Cat to Your Resident DOG

- **Maintain Separation:** when you bring your new cat home, set up a safe room (base camp) with the directions above. Prevent your resident dog from entering the safe room during the initial adjustment period.
- **Introduce by Smell:** repeat the same towel procedure as outlined above in cat-to-cat introductions.
- **Encourage Interaction Through a Closed Door:** place both the dog and cat's food by the door to the safe room you have set up for your new cat.
- **Open the Door:** after your new cat has been in her safe room for about one week, leash your dog and crack the door while keeping a tight hold on the leash. Once your cat comes out of the room, allow them to sniff each other. Make sure your cat has a place to escape if he or she is stressed during this time. Hissing and growling is normal until the two get comfortable with each other, which can take up to a month. If either cat or dog swats or bites, return the cat to their safe room and try again in a day or two.
- **Increase their time together:** Continually increase the amount and length of time of interactions. After numerous interactions, the next step is to allow the cat full reign of the house while you are home. During this time, ensure your dog is leashed to maintain control. Until you can fully trust them together, you should always make sure the new cat and dog separated when you are not home or are unable to supervise their interactions.

3. FOOD

At CFFR, we recommend you continue to feed the food your new cat was enjoying in his/her foster home.

KITTENS: Royal Canin Mother/Babycat both wet and dry until kittens are 4 months old, then gradually transition to Royal Canin Kitten both wet and dry. These are excellent foods for the first year of a kitten's life, at which point you can transition to adult food.

ADULTS: Royal Canin Adult Indoor Cat both wet and dry.

How to transition your kitten/cat to a new food:

Begin with a mix of 25% of your cat's new food and 75% of the old food. Feed this for about two to three days. Slowly increase the amount of new food so that you have a 50/50 mix for your cat to enjoy. After two to three days of half and half, you can move on to a mix of 75% of the new food and 25% of the old diet. After a few days of that, you can safely transition your kitten/cat to the new food entirely. Note: If you see that the new diet is causing soft stools, back up and take the transition more slowly.

4. THE LITTER BOX

Cats do not need to learn how to use a litter box – it comes naturally. They simply prefer that their litter box is clean, is in a consistent location, and has the type of litter and box setup that they prefer.

If you repeatedly experience litter box issues, the first step is visiting your veterinarian to rule out potential medical issues. More often than not, this will be the cause of litter box issues.

A. Cleanliness - No one likes a dirty bathroom! Clean litter boxes **daily** by scooping waste, and fully clean and scrub the litter box every few weeks and/or when it becomes heavily soiled.

B. Location & Distance

- Number of litter boxes: the rule of thumb is number of cats plus one (so if you have 2 cats, you need 3 boxes)
- Keep the litter box in an area convenient and private for your cat, such as a closet or a bathroom (NOT a laundry room).
- Place litter boxes in different areas. If you have a multi-level home, have a litter box on each level.
- If your cat does not like loud noises, placing the box near a furnace or appliances may be startling and uncomfortable.

C. Types of Litter and Litter Boxes

KITTENS: Only use unscented NON-CLUMPING clay litter until your kitten is 4 months old. Kittens sometimes ingest litter, and if they ingest clumping litter, it can create a LIFE-THREATENING blockage in their digestive system.

ADULTS: Adult cats use clay litter, either clumping or non-clumping

** Many cats will stop using the litter box if they do not like a "fancy" type of litter that you have chosen to try (for instance - crystals, pine pellets, etc.)

4. The LITTER BOX – continued....

Furnish your cats with large enough litter boxes so that they can turn around, dig, and bury. Some cats prefer covered litter boxes, while others refuse to use a covered litter box. If you have multiple cats, understand that covered litter boxes do allow cats to trap other cats inside.

How to transition your kitten/cat to a new litter:

Begin with a mix of 25% of your cat's new litter and 75% of the old litter. Each time you change the litter, add a larger portion of the new litter. Continue this process slowly over a few weeks until you have transitioned completely to the new litter. Note: if your cat resists using the new litter, back up and take this transition more slowly and/or pick a different type of new litter.

5. COLLARS

Your kitten does NOT need a collar! We do not recommend using any collars until after a cat is a year old. If you *insist* on using a collar, please buy a KITTEN sized breakaway collar and DO NOT use an adult collar as it is very easy for a kitten to get their lower jaw or paw caught in a collar that is too big, resulting in an ER visit!

6. CAT SCRATCHING SOLUTIONS

Scratching is a healthy and natural feline behavior that should not be avoided but rather redirected to more appropriate surfaces. Every cat has their own preference for scratching, so you may need to try a few different options to ensure the best fit for you and your new family member – both vertical scratching posts and horizontal scratching pads. When cats scratch, they are depositing their scent. When they encounter their scent, they feel comfortable and “at home.” Declawing should NEVER be an option. Learn more about that at www.thepawproject.org.

A. Recommendations

- Scratching posts with sisal or rope and horizontal sisal or cardboard scratching pads. We recommend a number of horizontal cardboard scratchers and tall vertical towers.
- Place the post near your cat's food or bed - they prefer to scratch after eating or napping.
- To attract your cat to his or her post, hang toys from the top of the post or rub it with catnip.

B. Trim nails Regularly

The longer the nail, the sharper it is. Nail trimming is important to prevent the nails from curling into the paw pads.

- Trimming should be done every 2-3 weeks.
- Most cats do tolerate nail trims. You can condition your cat to tolerate nail trimming by playing with their feet when you are holding them.
- If you do not feel comfortable trimming the nails yourself or if your cat is too difficult to handle, your vet or a local groomer would be happy to assist for a reasonable fee.
- Trimming a cat's nails is sometimes a two-person job, one to hold your cat and one to trim the nails.
- *How to Trim Nails:* apply pressure to the middle of the paw pad, which will expose the nail.
- When trimming, only cut the clear, hooked part of the nail.
- Be sure to avoid the pink area, called a “quick”.
- Trim all claws, including the “dew claw”, also known as a “thumb nail”.

C. Biting and Scratching

Cats, especially kittens, become overly excited during playtime with humans. This may cause biting or scratching, as if they are playing with another cat. You can avoid this by providing your cat with an appropriate way to spend his or her energy and to act out their predatory nature. Cats with active and regular playtimes are less likely to scratch and bite.

- When playtime results in scratches or bites, end playtime immediately and walk away and give them a substitute. Your cat will not understand this the first few times it happens, but with repetition they will learn that playtime only continues when they behave appropriately.
- Teach your cat the difference between hands and toys.
- DO NOT engage in any kind of play with your hands.
- Feather wands are best for this as they put a safe and healthy distance between the toy and your hand.

7. COMMON FELINE ILLNESSES

Cats are more likely to become ill in a stressful environment, which can include becoming welcomed to a new home and meeting new people. **Please contact CFFR immediately (Cari Dicke, 303-888-7238) if you have ANY questions or concerns so that we can help guide you in working with your veterinarian. Symptoms below related to common feline illnesses:**

- **Upper Respiratory Infection (URI):** similar to a common cold, including symptoms of sneezing, nasal discharge, eye discharge, and wheezing. Contact your local veterinarian if your cat is behaving in a lethargic manner, not eating or having trouble breathing.
- **Diarrhea:** Cats have sensitive stomachs and may experience an upset stomach if they are stressed or have abrupt food changes. Contact your local veterinarian if your cat has diarrhea that does not resolve in 2 - 3 days or immediately if you see blood in the stool.
- **Urinary Tract Infection UTI:** Cats are unique to humans and can develop urinary tract issues directly from stress related factors. Contact your local veterinarian if your cat is straining in the box, not using the box, making frequent trips to the box, or acting as if he or she is in pain while using the litter box.
- **Fungal Infection:** If your cat has scaly and/or bald patches please contact CFFR and/or your local veterinarian.